

Missouri Teens - Violent Deaths

Nationally, 75% of deaths among youth (ages 15 - 19) were caused by accidents, homicides or suicides in 1999. Deaths among this age group are often the result of risk-taking behavior. While media attention continues to focus on the number of youth homicide perpetrators and victims, it is important to note that motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of violent death for teens.

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the most significant risk factors among teenage drivers are inexperience, low rates of seatbelt use and alcohol. Inexperienced drivers lack the perception, judgment and decision-making skills that take practice to acquire. Advanced driving skills, such as driving at night and during rush hour traffic, detecting threats and recovering from a skid, take a lot of practice to master. Teens are known for their impulsive risk-taking behavior and perceived invulnerability.

The five-year aggregate teen violent death rate decreased between 1994 and 2000, but rose in 2001. In 2001, 365 Missouri teens died violently. Of these, 55.6% were motor vehicle crash victims, 22.4% were homicide victims, and 13.7% were suicides.

More detailed information from prior years shows that Missouri teenagers are three to four times more likely to be involved in a crash than other Missouri drivers. Of the total motor vehicle crashes in Missouri in 1999, more than 31% involved a young driver (15 - 20 years of age). Of the total child motor vehicle fatalities in 2000, 49% occurred among teenagers, 15 - 17 years old.

Use of seatbelts reduces the risk of motor vehicle fatalities. Missouri's 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found 24% of students reporting that they never or rarely wore a seatbelt when riding in a car driven by someone else. Of the teen motor vehicle fatalities in 2000, 52% were unrestrained at the time of the crash.

In the 2002 National Kids Count Data Book, Missouri ranked 44th of all states in the number of teens who died violently, based on 1999 teen death data. In 1999, the legislature passed new laws providing for a graduated driver's license that would become effective January 1, 2001. It increases the amount of time teens can practice driving skills by allowing them to apply for a learner's permit at fifteen. With the learner's permit, the teen can only drive with supervision, may apply for an intermediate license that prohibits unsupervised driving between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., except under specific circumstances. If the teen has had no alcohol-related enforcement contacts and no traffic convictions for which points are assessed, they may apply for a full driver's license at the age of 18. Other rules apply to teens with more than six points, or whose intermediate driver's license is denied, suspended, cancelled or revoked. This change should reduce the number of teens killed in motor vehicles.

The teen violent death rate for minority youth for 1997 - 2001 was lower than the rate for Caucasian youth (69.1 per 100,000 versus 76.2). Rates for minority teen violent deaths have dropped sharply since 1992 - 1996 and rates for Caucasian teens have risen. Minority youth were most likely to be homicide victims, with 71.6% of violent deaths attributable to homicide. Motor vehicle accidents accounted for 69.5% of deaths to white teens.

Source: Kids Count in Missouri 2002

Missouri Women's Council

421 East Dunklin Street ~ PO Box 1684 ~ Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
Toll Free in Missouri: (877) 426-9284 ~ (573) 751-0810 ~ Fax: (573) 751-8835
WebSite: www.womenscouncil.org ~ Email: wcouncil@mail.state.mo.us

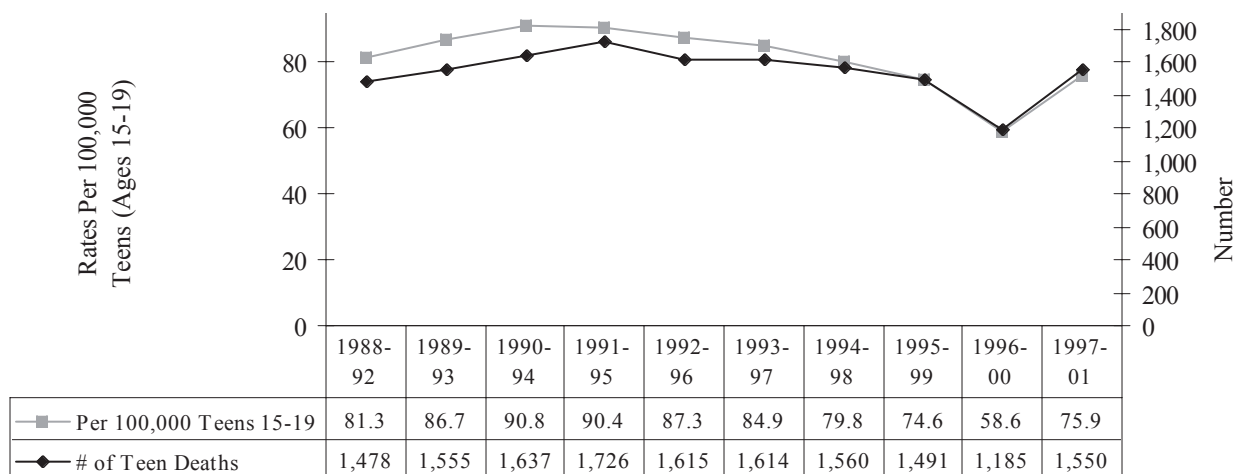
03/03

Preventive Factors

Ways to reduce teen deaths include:

- Teen education on the potentially tragic consequences associated with operating a vehicle under dangerous or hazardous conditions, including driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and not wearing a seatbelt;
- Posted telephone numbers and available resources that teens can easily access and utilize, including Missouri's ***Kids Under Twenty-One*** (KUTO), a 24-hour peer-led suicide prevention and crisis intervention hotline;
- Better communication from parents, educators, school counselors, and other community leaders, so teens know supportive adults are available;
- Mental health support services, especially for high-risk groups such as homosexual teens;
- Community- or school-based crime prevention programs that address issues such as substance abuse, anger management, gun control, gang violence, and community policing;
- Limit easy access to guns and other weapons in the home;
- Constructive alternative activities to reduce violent and high-risk behavior.

Violent Deaths of Teens, 1992 - 2001



This variable measures the number of teens ages 15 to 19 who died because of motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides or unintentional injuries. It is expressed at a rate of 100,000 teens of that age. Data are aggregated, or combined, for five-year periods to arrive at more stable rates.

Missouri Teen Suicide Hotline Numbers

Cape Girardeau - Community Counseling Center	800-356-5395
Springfield - Crisis Assistance Team	800-494-7355
St. Louis - Behavioral Health Response	800-811-4760
St. Joseph - Family Guidance Center for Behavioral Health	888-279-8188
St. Louis - Kids Under Twenty-One (KUTO)	888-644-5886
St. Louis - Life Crisis Services, Inc.	314-647-4357